

HUFFPOST BUSINESS

What Does It Take to be a Great Leader?

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There is a lot of talk about leadership right now and what it takes to be a great and effective leader. We are in the midst of an election year and all candidates are closely assessed on their ability to lead. As we size up each of the candidates and make our decision to determine which will get our vote, have we stepped back and truly evaluated them based on a specific leadership criteria? What does it take to be a great leader... and how do we actually define 'great'?

Who comes to mind when you think of great leadership? Some contenders are Mother Teresa, Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Dalai Lama, and Malala Yousafzai to name a few. Not only do they all have the commonality of being passionate visionaries who are able to influence others in a positive way, they have successfully defined, built and articulated their personal brand that sets them apart as leaders in their craft. Great leaders know their differentiator and the value they offer. Their personal brand is clearly identified and everything they do reflects that brand and is part of their legacy.

Leadership skills and competencies are a requirement for most professionals at all levels in today's competitive marketplace. The ability to bring out talent in others and unleash their utmost potential is one sure way of measuring leadership capability. Every organization may have a different set of skills needed for success, and individuals may have their own set of criteria for measuring leadership but there are certain leadership competencies that are at the foundation of effective leadership.

Top Ten Competencies of Leadership:

Listening Skills - conducting and initiating dialogue that requires active and reflective listening; being attentive to what others are saying, asking good questions, obtaining accurate comprehension; focusing on the other person's thoughts and perspectives; as well as strong interpersonal skills to maintain a productive and substantive dialogue

Emotional Intelligence - effectively communicating between the emotional and rational sides of our brain; EQ can be developed and is defined in four dimensions - self awareness (self-assessment), self-management (self control), social awareness (empathy) and relationship management (relationship building), according to psychologist and author Daniel Goleman

Action-Oriented - leading by example and creating a culture that enacts values stated and achieves results; doing what you say you will do and what you ask of others; giving priority to the learning initiatives necessary to achieve desired results; and ultimately, having the ability to develop the people around you, encouraging growth, and risk-taking

Diversity Awareness - endorsing a culture that understands and recognizes the importance of diversity for success; embracing the cultural, social and economic needs and differences within this diversity; providing positive influences and role modeling; and promoting the value-add of everyone

Energy, Enthusiasm and Eagerness - these 3 E's always generate positive attitudes and optimistic thinking, resulting in high impact and motivation; this is contagious - if you embody positive energy, enthusiasm and eagerness in your everyday interactions, so will others

Responsiveness to needs - anticipate the unexpected, take a big picture perspective, think differently and creatively, be a proactive problem solver, take into consideration the needs of all constituencies (peers, staff, managers, leaders, team members, customers, etc.) and the organization as a whole with the appropriate level of urgency

Sense of Humor - always keep things in perspective, maintain a balanced and grounded outlook at all times, use laughter and humor appropriately as an effective stress releaser as well as team builder; smile and laugh often appreciating the positive in all situations

High Standards of Excellence - set a tone for high standards of excellence; display behaviors that create trust and credibility; maintain the highest level of integrity, honesty and sincerity; be genuine with your intentions; hold a high bar for acceptable standards, expectations, norms and behaviors and do not tolerate anything less than the highest of standards

Influencing - develop a deep understand of the needs of all stakeholders, rally involvement and participation, make the connections and link for everyone involved; address their needs and gain their support; be the catalyst for change to impact results and communicate in a way that engages responsiveness and commitment by all

Proactive - be the strategic visionary who is able to envision and anticipate future needs, look ahead, be forward-thinking and translate goals and objectives into strategies, both short-term and long-term; and see all possibilities that you follow through to execution

How does your candidate size up to these competencies? Before you cast your ballot in November as well as determine what kind of leader you'd like to work with and what kind of leader you'd like to be, use this criteria as a foundational assessment. Happy voting!

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